

**MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND
RECREATION PROJECT**

APPLICATION FORM 2009

Project Name: **Mid-Canon FAS Parking Improvement Project**

Reservoir or River Segment: **Missouri River, south of Cascade, MT.** County(ies): **Cascade County**

Site Name and/or Legal Location: **Mid-Canon FAS**

Applicant Name **Tom Reilly**

Position (if applicable) **Assistant Administrator, Montana State Parks**

Address **1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-0701**

Telephone # **(406) 444-3752**

E-mail Address **treilly@mt.gov**

Project Sponsors:

A submitted application will need a Project Sponsor. Project sponsors serve on Missouri-Madison Regional Working Groups, and include representatives of the U.S. Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; local government; Madison, Gallatin, Broadwater, Chouteau, Lewis and Clark, or Cascade Counties; PPL Montana and the Bureau of Reclamation. See page 1-9 of the Comprehensive Recreation Plan for a list of 2009 members of the Regional Working Groups (www.apleco.com/mmcrcp.asp).

Project Sponsor Name **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

Position (if applicable) **Assistant Administrator, Montana State Parks**

Address **1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-0701**

Telephone # **(406) 444-3752**

E-mail Address **treilly@mt.gov**

	<u>Financial Support</u>
Total Project Cost:	\$ 35,000
Applicant Contributions (FWP):	\$ 5,000
PPL Montana Match Request:	\$ 1,250
River Fund Request:	\$ 28,750

Proposed Project Period: **Spring 2010**

Please note: Document all in-kind support and contributed services from project partners under Scoring Criterion #1 on page 3.

Has this project been previously submitted for funding consideration by the River Fund Board, either as a separate project or part of another project? Yes ___No. If "Yes," please identify which years the application was submitted and, if the project was previously funded, list the amount funded by year.

A project was submitted in 2006 for improvements to upgrade the existing gravel access road and parking areas at Mid-Canon FAS. A total of \$21,250 was requested (\$11,250 PPL Montana and \$10,000 River Fund) and approved for this site upgrade. Additionally, FWP provided an additional \$3,750 in funding for the grade/gravel project.

In 2007, FWP funded a separate \$50,000 project which paved the access road into the site from the county road through the residential area and into Mid-Canon FAS.

MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND RECREATION PROJECT

Project Description

Mid-Canon FAS is a very popular fishing access site on the upper reach of the Missouri River, in this case generally extending from Holter Dam to Cascade, MT. The site is the preferred take-out point for recreationalists floating the upper reach of the river from any of the numerous put-in points up-river. Additionally, Mid-Canon FAS is the traditional and preferred take-out point for floaters on the Dearborn River. Mid-Canon FAS is the closest public take-out point below the Dearborn's confluence with the Missouri River.

The next closest public FAS take-out opportunities downstream are the Hardy Bridge/Prewett Creek/Mountain Palace FASs located approximately 5-6 miles downstream. Besides the extended distance, the confined nature and topographical realities of these FASs is such that they offer significantly less parking availability and more difficult river access for retrieval of boats.

The problem that has developed in recent years involves the increasing number of recreationalist's vehicles that are shuttled to the site to await floaters existing the river at Mid-Canon FAS. The parking area has been expanded to accommodate these vehicles in recent years, but for an increasing amount of the summer season the site parking available does not meet the public's need. In 2009 some additional areas of the site were mowed to provide overflow parking areas. This is not optimal however as in dry conditions the concern is that a vehicle (or visitor) will contribute to a fire on the site. In wet conditions, the soils on the mowed areas become rutted and boggy. Additionally, the existing site parking situation has resulted in vehicles being shuttled to the site early in the day, then blocked in for hours by other vehicles arriving afterwards.

This project will expand the existing gravel parking areas at Mid-Canon FAS to accommodate the growing public use in an organized manner. In addition to expanding the gravel parking areas, concrete pin-down curbs will be installed to delineate parking slots to avoid the situation of one vehicle/trailer parked inappropriately complicating the parking area for those visitors arriving afterwards.

Scoring Criteria

1. Collaboration

Again, Mid-Canon FAS is a very heavily utilized FAS on the Missouri River. Arguably one of the most used public FASs on the Missouri River between Great Falls and Helena. Having the site available to the public has been a collaborative effort for some time. The land is owned by Cascade County as county park land, but has been managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) via a no-cost lease arrangement with the County as a public FAS since 1981. In 2007, due to growing complaints and increasing pressure from neighboring private homeowners, FWP paved the access road into the site. This improvement eliminated the dust issues and routine grade/gravel maintenance problems typically associated with a heavily used recreational road also used by neighboring private homeowners. The cost of this effort was approximately \$50,000. For this specific parking area expansion there are no contributing partners. The only other possibility would be Cascade County, but they were unable to contribute any funding toward the access road paving effort completed in 2007. If this project is to advance, the only funding to complete it is likely to come from this grant opportunity and FWP.

2. Need

The parking situation that occurred in 2009 at Mid-Canon FAS is such that it must be addressed. Mid-Canon FAS is the take-out location to have vehicles shuttled to by a majority of recreationalists floating the Missouri River or the Dearborn River. Public use of the site is expected to at least remain at today's high use levels or increase. The parking area expansion will address this need by providing the ability to park the high number of vehicles in a safe, organized, and structured manner. If FWP were to allow the public to resolve the parking situation on their own, we will continue to see site resource damage occur, along with the possibility of a fire starting on and potentially spreading noxious weeds to/from the site to neighboring private lands. Additionally,

expanding the parking area will virtually eliminate the condition of vehicles being blocked in by others for hours at a time during busy use periods.

3. Benefit to Public Recreation

The expansion of the gravel parking area will relieve parking congestion at the site and resolve the majority of the safety issues FWP staff are dealing with now. In addition to providing a solution to the parking, it is expected that recreationalists will be relieved of frustration that is occurring today, as well as be routed in/out of the site in a more timely and organized manner. Given the significant number of people who utilize this section of the Missouri River, this increased 'site efficiency' can only benefit the overall recreational experience of people (rafters, anglers, private floaters, outfitted parties, campers at Mid-Canon FAS, etc.).

4. Operation and Maintenance

Expanding the existing gravel parking area at Mid-Canon FAS will improve the operations and maintenance (O&M) situation at this site on many fronts. The expanded (and existing) gravel parking areas are very low-cost improvements that require only periodic maintenance such as the addition of gravel and reshaping via a local dirt-work contractor. On another front, the expansion of the gravel parking area will reduce O&M costs that are currently occurring related to mowing the overflow parking areas, monitoring them, and finally in sorting out and responding to visitor complaints. The lack of adequate organized parking on the Mid-Canon FAS has created additional O&M costs for FWP on numerous levels, from our on-site FAS Caretaker staff, to Parks staff and wardens addressing visitor complaints, to letters of dissatisfaction written to the Helena FWP headquarters office. It is anticipated that the expansion of the gravel parking areas will eliminate virtually all of these issues and ultimately result in the public leaving their Missouri River recreational experience with a higher level of overall satisfaction.

5. Protecting Resource Values

This project will be a significant help in protecting the resource values and natural areas of the Mid-Canon FAS site. The practice of recreationalists parking outside the hard-surfaced parking areas is contributing to resource damage in the form of rutted areas, the spread of noxious weeds, and the potential to have an accidental fire start on the site in grass areas.

